
‘Not a Boy, Not yet a Man’: Analysing the Development of a Young Man from Jung’s Standpoint

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence, as we all know, is one of the most complicated stages of one’s life. It is marked by psychological, cognitive, and physiological changes. The experiences and learning at this stage forms a soil bed, on which the plant of adulthood grows. However, what it grows into is the question. Young boys and girls are confused about the changes taking place at every level, and thus are vulnerable against long term problems like substance abuse, personality and mood disorders. Therefore, this stage can either ‘make you or break you’.

This research paper looks specifically into the relationships of a young boy who is dealing with puberty, especially from sexual point of view. He is no longer a boy, but definitely not yet a man. There is a constant tussle between the two forces. It is during this phase that one’s sexuality, sexual preferences, sexual confidence etc are developed. Issues like homosexuality, Promiscuity, masculinity etc in men, have their roots in how an adolescent boy develops and learns in this crucial stage.

Carl Gustav Jung understood its importance and has explicitly written on this theme. Not only this, his theories are finding their confirmations in the research that is being undertaken today. It becomes amply clear that sexual experiences in adolescence have far reaching consequences and affect our relationships in adulthood in more ways than we thought earlier.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Young boy, sexual relationships, Carl Jung.*

The word adolescence is coined from the Latin verb ‘adolescere’ which means ‘to grow into maturity’. Therefore adolescence is a phase wherein an individual grows to be a responsible adult. Peterson (1988) has described adolescence as a phase of life beginning in biology and ending in society. This implies that adolescence is that stage wherein an individual faces a number of physiological, cognitive and psychological changes -- a change in his physical and

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social characteristics from what are typically considered child-like to what is considered adult-like (Lerner & Spanier, 1980). Adolescence, thus is a very important phase wherein the experiences and learning of an individual form a base for what an individual will be like when he grows up to be an adult.

Adolescence has been divided into three sub-periods:

1. Early adolescence
2. Mid-adolescence
3. Late adolescence

The three stages are discussed briefly as under:

EARLY ADOLESCENCE

This period includes the developmental changes and the onset of puberty initiated and indicated by the growth spurt. During this period, the adolescents remain home-centred. The behaviour of the adolescent may be temporarily disorganized and erratic along with a decreased willingness to accommodate the expectation of his parents and others. Also, wilder mood swings and periodic bouts of feeling ill-treated and unloved may dominate his emotional life. His group activities are primarily with members of his own sex. This period falls between 10 years and 13 years.

MID ADOLESCENCE

This period follows puberty by about one to one- and- a -half years. It spans between 13 years and 18 years. At times, the first tentative interest and approach towards the opposite sex takes place. The awakening of heterosexual interest often disrupts previous peer groupings and intimate friendships. Characteristically, this is the stage when adolescent rebellion starts-- a period of irritability, wide mood swings and rapidly changing feelings. Obedience to parental dictates is replaced by conformity to peer group standards and loyalties. Early sexual exploration begins.

LATE ADOLESCENCE

This is the period of transition as the young consolidate their identity and come to grips with their future. This stage falls between the age 14 and 19 years. The late adolescent is able to be more selective and discriminating in his/her relationships. Feeling like a more complete and separate person, s/he is more able by this stage to form and maintain truly intimate relationship with others whose beliefs, ideas and motives s/he can see and respect as clearly as s/ he does his own.

The early adolescence is characterised by the puberty hit. The hormonal changes that occur at this time initiate an individual into adulthood. Though it is a biological process, it has a deep impact on the psychological and social functioning. This view is validated by both evolutionary (Parker, 2000) and psychodynamic theories. (Freud, 1958; Freud, 1998)

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For Sigmund Freud, Puberty meant the beginning of adult sexual life. (Freud,1998). He considered male sexuality to be “straightforward and understandable”, and female sexuality to be “affectional and a sensual current.”

Taking her father's view forward, Anna Freud (1958) developed a viewpoint wherein she considered defence mechanisms to play an important role in adaptive mechanisms of the adolescents. They help in keeping the genital urges at bay. Unconsciously, adolescents use these defence mechanisms to reduce anxiety.

Till recently, puberty has been seen as a biological process having psychological implications. Now, we have started following a much more integrated viewpoint in which puberty is seen as a “biopsychosocial transition” which is initiated by major neuroendocrine changes and is accompanied by psychosocial and behaviour changes that simultaneously initiate changes in the social contexts in which adolescents find themselves. (Handbook of Adolescent Psychology, 2009). This view is known as the *dynamic integration* and refers to the essential and changing fusion of processes across psychological, biological and contextual levels of analysis (Susman and Rogol, 2004)

This research paper looks specifically into the relationships of a young man who is dealing with puberty, from the standpoint of Carl Jung. There are a number of problems that a young boy at this crucial stage deals with. Jung enlists those difficulties to be “excessive anger or unhappiness, aggression, substance abuse, self harm, suicidal behaviour, excessive introversion and brooding, sleep and eating disturbances, school or work difficulties, relationship difficulties.” Though many of these above mentioned topics are very well researched, the sexual aspect is almost ignored. Since one is not yet a functioning adult yet, his sexuality is not given much importance. Jung however considers it so important that he feels that it often shapes how a boy will be when he is a man.

EXPERIMENTATION

The onrush of puberty in a boy brings a powerful change in his psychology. He has the ‘sexuality of a grown man and the soul of a child’. There are ‘obscene fantasies, smutty talks’. There are a lot of moral conflicts and temptations. Basically, a young man is full of illusions, which are a sign of psychic disequilibrium.

Because of these ‘rushes’, homosexual experiences are much more common among young males than admitted. It seemed to him to be more prevalent in cultures where the males and females were kept in strict segregation. In this context, he doesn't speak of the adult, ‘permanent’ homosexuality; but of the ‘straight’ youngsters who enjoy such ‘rapturous friendship’ that they also use to express their feelings. According to the current research by Royal College of Psychiatrists, Crushes on someone of the same gender are common during this phase, but only a

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few of them turn gay. But this may also lead to confusion whether they are gay or straight. Jung considers a homosexual relationship between an older boy and a younger boy to be 'educative' to the latter and 'advantageous' to both. However, the loyalty aspect is almost always missing. According to Jung, 'the more homosexual a man is, more he is prone to disloyalty and seduction'. If however, the loyalty is present, such a friendship brings out the feminine, over sensitive, gushing, aesthetic element in a man; which if in excess can also be highly detrimental to his character in adulthood.

Even the heterosexual experiences are of the most animalistic nature. There is no psychological/emotional dimension to it. Any female would do. Jung says that to derive conclusions on someone's character based on this phase is false. However, if there are too many experiences of this nature, there is a bad impact on the man's psyche. He might grow up to be a respectable citizen outwardly, but inwardly, he would face repression of his sexual fantasies. These might further lead to coldness or lack of feeling towards ones' wife or partner in adult life. It might also lead to a premature choice of a wife. The sexual aspect of their relationship will never be able to provide him psychological fulfilment or satisfaction.

Talking about the heterosexual relationship in young age, we cannot ignore the controversial topic of older women with young men. Older women, single or otherwise hold a special fascination for the young boys. According to Jung, a young boy is usually 'rather shy, unsure of himself, inwardly afraid, sometimes infantile'. He naturally seeks a mother, perhaps because he has too much or too little love in his own family. The question of parenting at this crucial stage comes into focus. Over protective and totally negligent parents are both detrimental to a child's development. Research has shown that parents who are authoritative but at the same time let their wards grow according to their needs, wishes, aims etc; tend to have the most confident kids. Emotions, expectations and discipline needs to form a fine balance for a child to grow into a self sufficient, secure young man.

Getting to the previous point, Jung says that even this type of a relationship is advantageous to the young mind of the boy but only if he quickly outgrows this relationship. 'If he cannot let go of her apron- strings he will become a spineless parasite – for he might sink down to the level of a "lap-dog" or a "pet cat" of the older women who have money to fund them.

ABSTINENCE

Our culture teaches us to abstain from sexual relationships before marriage, especially at a student age. There are some people who consider this injurious. But Jung supports the traditional line of thought. Abstinence is important till a specific age. It begins to be injurious only when one reaches the age where he can have fulfilling, committed relationships. There are numerous studies that back this up. Individuals who have later sexual relationships are more likely to be married later and also have fewer romantic partners in adulthood. Not only this, there are

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significantly lower levels of relationship dissatisfaction in adulthood. (Harden,2012; Nauert,2012). The reasoning given for this is that people become more “choosy” in selecting parenters, and “give in” only after considerable thought , surety and maturity.

Whitborne (2013) links a majority of mental health problems, like substance abuse, with the number of sex partners, saying that there is a significant correlation with each other, though the causation is not yet clear. Weil et al. (2011) say that Casual sex relationships are a risk factor in itself. They lack emotional fulfilment and are likely to be impersonal. The substance abuse seems to become a coping mechanism to deal with loneliness and despair. This loneliness is not always conscious. People might repress their feelings and overtly continue to rather enjoy casual dating. Young men, who abstain from sexual relationships tend to indulge in masturbation. Though there are issues concerning the injurious effects of masturbation. Jung seems it perfectly normal and a 'safety valve'. It is uncomplicated, ordinary, and simple for a young boy. Because there is no need for sexual relationships at this age, masturbation can serve to be a healthy alternative. Cooper and Santella (2013) support masturbatrion because it reduces stress, anxiety, prevents infertility and has no emotional baggage to go with it. During adolescence, it is much more common than sex. However it is not admitted to very often. (Herbenick et al., 2010). This is because there is a stigma attached to it. adolescents can be encouraged to talk more openly about it. Parental guidance will be of utmost help in this scenerio. This needs to be paid attention to. Next comes in the flirting. It is an 'expression of an experimental attitude which is altogether appropriate at this age'. Since there is no obligation among both people, this is an advantage. The only disadvantage a young person may face is that they might become a 'habitual flirt, shallow, frivolous, and heartless'. A man turns into a “drawing room hero and a professional heartbreaker”. More than this, he will be blissfully unaware of his shallowness and frivolity, and also what a “boring” figure that he cuts.

HOW “MANLY” AM I?

A current topic that is in discussion these days pertaining to the development of young boys is – perception, development and projection of masculinity. 'Boys don't cry', 'Boys should be hardy' – are some of the statements that are continuously conditioned into the vulnerable minds of little boys. It is counted as a virtue to repress his feminine traits as much as possible. The Social Learning theory states the importance of learning gender- specific behaviours from adult role models, like parents. Imitation, parental expectations, societal expectations, projection of gender specific traits all mould the development of children and adolescents. (Crouter et al. 2007; Cunningham, 2001; McHale et al. 2004). Not only this, gender socialization has also been found to happen due to siblings (Lloyd-Richardson & Niaura, 2005), Peers (Mayeux, Sndstorm & Cilliessen, 2008) and Media (Greenfeild & Yan, 2006). These force them to fit into the prototype of a “man” or a “woman”.

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No wonder why Anima (Feminine side of a man) is extremely resistant to consciousness. Jung believed that anima originated from a young boy's experiences with women – mothers, sisters, aunts, friends, lovers which combine into the concept of “women”. Anima exists in every male. Jung says that “No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The fact is, rather, that very masculine men have, carefully guarded and hidden, a very soft emotional life, often incorrectly described as “feminine”. In order to bring anima to consciousness, great courage is required. A man must overcome intellectual barriers and go deep into his unconscious. The repression of “feminine” traits and inclinations naturally cause these contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious. Because of these accumulated, unconscious traits, a man is tempted to choose a woman, who unhesitatingly projects these traits. There will be an obvious attraction to such a woman. Keeping in view this line of thought, it can also be further implied that if a boy develops into a balanced individual- a man with balanced softer side- he might look for a woman who is also balanced in the same way. This would be very healthy for both sexes. Here again, this thrusting of traits into young males and females, comes into limelight. The more we force upon them to be in a certain way, the more they will push their actual selves in their unconscious. This invariably leads to incongruence in their young minds. Boundaries need to be drawn as to where we stop toying with the psyche of the youngsters. This fact cannot be stressed upon enough.

CONCLUSION

In the words of Jung, “the widespread discussion of the sexual question has brought the extraordinary importance of sexuality in all its psychic ramifications to the forefront of our social consciousness. Today it is no longer possible to brush aside the tremendous psychological importance of sex with a bad joke or a display of moral indignation. People are beginning to see the sexual question in the seriousness it deserves. The natural result of this is that much that was formerly held to be beyond dispute is now open to doubt. There is, for instance, a doubt as to whether the officially sanctioned form of sexuality is the only one that is morally possible, and whether all other forms are to be condemned out of hand. The arguments for and against are gradually losing their moral acerbity, practical considerations force themselves into the discussion, and finally we are beginning to discover that legitimized sex is not the equivalent of moral superiority”.

Though not all concepts and ideas of Jung can be directly validated by research; but a whole lot of his viewpoints are in line with what many researchers are finding today. Therefore, it won't be wrong to say that Jung understood the depth of human psyche, of young men to be specific in this case. He understood the workings, implications and repercussions of the situations we face. The sexual aspect of young people remains an unexplored territory. The situations that Jung spoke about are valid in present day too. Either he was way ahead of his time, or he unlocked the basic, instinctual being that is universal and stays relevant no matter what time we are in.

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